

THE THINGS WE HOPE FOR
by
Linda Buntyn Willie

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

The Things We Hope For

By Linda Buntyn Willie

American Magazine

June, 1917

MARTHA WESSON was an old-maid school-teacher, timid, plain and drab as to exterior, but down in her heart she was like other women, and, like all other women, she dreamed dreams.

Brought up in a home where there was never anything but children and dreary poverty, and with the burden of filling the hungry mouths, that never seemed to be filled, on her shoulders when she should have still been playing paper dolls, she had had little but her dreams.

She had never had a sweetheart. She was too timid and unprepossessing to invite acquaintance, and too shy to encourage advances if any had been made; and if you had told anybody that she dreamed like other women they would have laughed. But she did, and always there was the prince who would come and wrap her about with a mantle of love and care and tenderness, so that she would never have to worry, never have to face disagreeable things, never have to lift where nature had fitted her to lean. Of course it was foolish in her, and only timid, shrinking women on whom have been thrust burdens and responsibilities that they are in nowise fitted to bear, and who have missed the things other women have, can understand and not laugh at her dreams.

But one can bear burdens and shoulder responsibilities they shrink from until it becomes second nature. So it was with Martha, and when, at thirty-five, she was suddenly relieved of her load—all but a legacy of debts—she felt utterly useless and unnecessary. And, after a time, she would have given anything to have her burden back again; to feel the pressure of necessity urging her on to do something she shrank from doing; to make sacrifices; to face responsibilities that frightened her. By this time the hope that her dreams might come true had grown so small she had almost ceased to dream, but faced a future that appalled her by its emptiness.

It was in this frame of mind that she trudged home late one evening through the rain, looking drabber and more old-maidish than usual. As she stood on the corner waiting for her car a fresh, strong voice crying the evening papers under the dripping awning startled her, and she turned and looked back.

He was standing just at the corner, a great sheaf of papers under his arm; his young face, with wide-open, sightless eyes, lifted as though he saw something beyond the wet awning, the film of smoke and the low-hanging clouds. He must have been about twenty-five years old, and his clothes, though worn, were very, very neat.

Something caught in Martha's throat at the sight of the sightless face lifted so bravely and the fresh, manly voice crying his wares. She did not buy a paper then, she could not, somehow; but the next

evening she walked the long blocks out of her way to pass the corner. She bought a paper this time; but, instead of the usual penny, she dropped a half-dollar from her meager little purse into his outstretched hand. He started as the coin touched his palm, then called to her as she was slipping away:

"Lady, you forgot your change!"

Martha went back, and there was a little flush on her thin cheeks as she watched him deftly counting out her change, explaining smilingly as he did so that the papers were only a penny.

After that Martha walked four blocks out of her way every evening for a paper and paid a penny for it, being careful always to have the change. One evening, however, when she was late on account of having some papers to grade, she forgot to get the change and while he counted it out he spoke to her shyly.

"You haven't missed buying a paper from me in a long time," he said.

Martha started guiltily. "Why—why, how did you know?"

"I know your voice. We blind soon get to know voices. I knew yours the second day."

After that Martha always stopped and talked to him a moment if he was not busy. She did not feel shy with him, that is, not much. He was so much younger than herself; then, he could not see her.

He always had her paper ready for her, being careful to save her one if he had sold out, and waiting for her, no matter how late she was. The sound of her voice always set him smiling, and one night he shyly asked her not to pay for her paper again.

Martha went home that night and put that first paper he had given her in the bottom of her trunk.

ONE day she found him in the park, sitting in the first spring sunshine, his blind face alight at the miracle of birth. She sat beside him for a while; then they walked up and down, his fingers timidly resting on her arm.

Martha went to the park every Sunday after that and he went also. She took magazines and books and papers and read to him, or they sat and talked, or walked up and down the graveled driveways. One day, when they were walking in an isolated corner, he turned to her suddenly.

"Miss Martha, I want to see you!" he said wistfully.

Martha stopped aghast. "Why, Ben!"

"I mean," he explained, "that I want to see you in the way we blind see—with my fingers. Will you let me pass them over your face?"

Martha stopped. "Why—why, yes, yes, of course!" she stammered. She trembled as his sensitive fingers passed over her face, though why she could not have told.

"You look like I thought you did," he said as they started on.

"Why—why, how is that?" Martha asked agitatedly, remembering, with a twinge, her unprepossessing face.

"I don't know just how to explain," he said smilingly; "but when I was a little boy there was a picture of a woman with a baby in her arms hanging over my bed. The woman looked down at the baby like my mother looked at me, and you look like that."

Martha caught her breath.

WHEN spring and summer had gone and the cold, wet, sloppy days had come, so they could not go to the park, Martha found him, after the first Sunday they had missed being together, with a wistful look on his face.

"I don't know what I'm going to do with myself now, Miss Martha," he said.

"Couldn't you come out to my house, Ben?" Martha asked suddenly, without at all intending to do so.

He started, his blind face lighting up. "Oh! Could I come, Miss Martha?"

"Of course," she said, trembling at her boldness, "any time you want to."

He came, just Sundays at first; then he begun coming in the evening and sitting quietly before her open fire. He was content to sit there silently while she graded papers, or to listen to her read or talk.

After a while he came so often that Martha's friends spoke to her about it; but she did not care and was astonished at herself for not caring. It was the first time she had had the courage to go on with anything in the face of disapproval. So he continued to come, and not once did Martha even hint to him that he was coming too often.

Then, one stormy, wet evening, he was not on his corner. It was the first time Martha had known him to miss being there, and she was worried. She waited for him a long time, but he did not come.

He was not there the next evening either, and on the third day they sent for her. He was sick—pneumonia—and was asking for her. She went, leaving her school, leaving everything, to take care of him. Then it was, as his blind eyes followed her around, or he begged to hold her hand while suffering, that she came to know what he meant to her, and the knowledge made her suffer. Not that she cared that he was blind, except for him; not that she cared what people would say because he sold papers; not that she cared that he could not be the prince, the protector of her dreams, but because the more than ten years between them could not be bridged!

She forgot all about the dreams that had kept her woman's heart alive for twenty years! She forgot all about the hope she had (Continued on page 112)

Acting—a Part-time Job

By Walter Prichard Eaton

Dramatic Reporter for THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE

OUT of a job! To you and me, the phrase is fraught with tragedy, or, at the very least, with annoyance and unpleasantness.

When we are young and hopeful, perhaps we don't so much mind losing one position to step into another. But when we are older, when we have acquired a home, a family, a set of habits, even though we speedily find new work again, the process is unpleasant. And, for the great majority of men and women in normal times, it is not even easy to find the new job, the older the applicant is the greater being the difficulty. The worker who has learned by years of practice to do one thing, often faces a tragedy when he sets out on the hunt for a new job. That is why the phrase "out of a job" has such poignant connotations for the average person.

But did you ever stop to think that the ordinary actor or actress is out of a job probably on the average of two or three times a year? Here is a profession with a higher percentage of uncertainty of employment than almost any other line of work, and at the same time a profession which requires of its practitioners a higher degree of nervous sensitiveness, a more strict retention of youthful charm and good looks, a more exacting standard of personal appearance—good clothes, pretty gowns, and the like. The public, which sees only the glitter of the stage, does not often consider the other side, the economic problems the players face, the practical perils, and often the tragedies of the profession.

There are numerous popular favorites, of course, who may act in half a dozen plays a season, one failing after the other, and yet have no cause to worry, because their services are always in demand at a good salary. That excellent actor, George Hassell, after he came to New York two or three years ago, has practically never been out of a job, and probably he didn't have to seek the jobs, either. They sought him. The reigning stars, of course, are, economically considered, "business properties," and their managers see to it that they are provided with plays each year.

But the popular leading men, the ingénues whom the public adores, the reigning stars, after all, form but a tiny fraction of the actor host. Mr. Arthur Hornblow, in his recent book, "The Stage as a Career," estimates that "there are to-day in this country 40,000 persons engaged in theatricals, fifty per cent at least of whom are legitimate actors." He makes the further statement that in 1915 no fewer than 10,000 applied to the Actors' Fund for relief, "on the plea that the wolf was at

the door and that they needed immediate pecuniary assistance." When you consider that 1915 was supposed to be a year of great general prosperity in this neutral land, to find fifty per cent of the estimated 20,000 legitimate actors, or one half of all the members of a recognized profession, applying for pecuniary assistance, makes you pause. Half the practitioners of an honorable and admired calling jobless, in a prosperity year! Is the profession overcrowded, or is it badly conducted? you ask.

The answer is, both. The profession is overcrowded, and perhaps always will be overcrowded. Nor does there seem to be any remedy for this, so long as the theater is the theater, and men and women are men and women. Talk we ever so loudly of the hardships and tragedies of the actor's lot, the compensating glamour will remain. When the stage loses its glamour, in fact, when you and I no longer get a pleasant thrill as we come down the aisle on our side of the footlights, and the actors no longer get a thrill when the curtain rushes up and they face the battery of our glances, when, in short, there is no longer any romance in seeing and in acting plays—why, then, perhaps young people of temperament will not yearn to "go on the stage." But not before. And when that

sometimes against direct social pressure, is one of those mysterious forces in the world which are higher than the money call, than the hearthstone security. Life has too few of such lures to make us wish to abolish this one.

But that it is necessary for one half of the acting profession to be out of jobs and pecuniarily embarrassed in a prosperity year in order to maintain the romantic lure of the stage, is rather too much of a pill to swallow. Something must be wrong with the present system of theater management. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of things wrong with it.

Until recent months, one of these things was that actors got no pay for rehearsals. The Actors' Equity Association has, after much effort and threats to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor, secured the acceptance by a good many managers of a form of contract which calls for a living wage during the rehearsal period.

But even this, of course, is not full pay, and deducts seriously from income. Suppose we say that a play is rehearsed on an average of three weeks. (Some few are, unfortunately for art, rehearsed less, some a good bit more.) Now bear in mind the fact, which is pretty well established by

figures, that at present two out of every three theatrical productions in America fail. (Eight out of ten made by one firm last winter failed.) That means the ordinary actor or actress, out of three attempts to land a salary-paying job, works for at least nine weeks on half pay or less. When you further deduct the usual summer vacation time of, say, six weeks, and add a week at the least hunting each new job, you reach the rather astonishing conclusion that the average actor may very conceivably lose nine weeks out of the fifty-two entire, and nine more weeks in large part. In other words, he is only a part-time worker. His "munificent" salary doesn't look so munificent when figured on this basis.

But the basis of figuring we have employed above actually is not a fair one. It would only be a fair one if the demand for actors were somewhere near the supply.

As we have seen, it isn't; it is far less than the supply. Consequently, the period of one week we have figured between jobs is, for hundreds and probably thousands of players, far too short. It would not surprise those who are on "the inside," if the figures could be compiled, to find that the average actor does not work half the year, that he spends as much, if not more, time hunting for a chance to act and in rehearsing than he does in actually practicing his profession.

For example, a (Continued on page 101)

All That Glitters is Not Gold

MR. EATON tells about a \$500-a-week actor who really took in just \$2,000 in the year 1916.

That little old \$200 check a man gets from the boss at the end of the month—*every month*—doesn't look so bad, does it?

time does come, the present writer hopes to be watching Garrick play "Hamlet" with a rosy, celestial cloud for curtain.

No sane person would recommend to a young man or woman the stage as a career. It would be to send them out into a world of struggle, of disappointment, of much futile effort and wasted time, of pecuniary uncertainty and domestic exile. And yet no sane person would deny in his heart that the lure which takes the youth or maiden into this life, against all advice,



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The four men who have prepared this book are experts of national reputation. "They are the best authorities on their subjects," says the Iron Age. Successful advertising men who deal with difficult problems cannot say too much for the book itself. "Full of suggestions that can be coined into dollars," says A. D. Blake, Manager Lithio-Sulphur Company. "More real, solid meat than anything I have read."—Bruce Barton. "Thoroughly teaches copy and layout."—G. B. Warren. "Unquestionably the one book."—W. H. Ingersoll, Ingersoll Watch Company. "Have every book on advertising, but this is the best."—W. F. Oldham, St. Paul. "Invaluable."—A. L. Tisch, Advertising Manager, Paige-Detroit Motor Car Company. "Authors know their business."—L. V. Anderson, Advertising and Sales Manager, Hupmobile. And so on.

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But she has taught me to love pictures and music—and children. I like business; but if business were suddenly snatched out of my life, I could go on perfectly happy without it. I want money; but if we had to give up to-morrow the little money we have saved, we should still be independent. I remember once meeting a man who had been one of the partners of a big banking concern. He had been living at the rate of twenty-five thousand dollars a year, and had everything that money could give. Suddenly, one day, the company failed, wiping out every dollar he had in the world. It was a couple of weeks afterward that I met him. I expected to find him aged, broken, crushed. Instead, he looked better than I had ever seen him; he was starting out to look for a job.

I began awkwardly to offer my sympathy; but he interrupted me like a shot.

"You know, Ned," he said, "an experience like that would have put me in my grave at one time in my life. But as you grow older you come to feel that as long as you have your wife, and your children, and love and health and your honor, that nothing that can happen can harm you very much."

I thought when he said it that he was putting up a plucky pretense. I know now that he was speaking the gospel truth. His wife had brought to him the richest gift a woman can bring, the gift that Elsie had brought to me—the divine treasure of contentment, the unpurchasable richness of independence of the world and superiority to any condition that the world can possibly impose.

"AM I WRONG in Spending \$9,000 a Year on My Three Children?" This is an autobiographical article by a rich New Yorker who estimates that when his children reach the age of twenty-one he will have spent \$100,000 on them. He wonders if he is right. It will be in the July number.

The Things We Hope For

(Continued from page 33)

nurtured that the prince would come and wrap her in a mantle of love and care and bear her burdens for her! Everything was swept away by a yearning to take care of Ben, to bear his burdens for him, to fill his dark days with tenderness and care. But when she looked in the mirror at her own lined face, that was far older than it should have been, then at his boyish visage, each year between them seemed a century.

But one day, when she saw his face whiten as he was seeing her with his sensitive fingers, and felt his fingers tremble against her lips, the years between them suddenly seemed as nothing, and she wondered that she had thought they mattered. She knew, though, that he would never speak. How could he?

He did not ask to see her after that. He did not rest his fingers on her arm as he had been wont to do when they were out

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OUT of a job! To you a the phrase is fraught with edy, or, at the very least, annoyance and unpleasantness. When we are young and full, perhaps we don't so much mind one position to step into another when we are older, when we have a home, a family, a set of habits, though we speedily find new work the process is unpleasant. And, great majority of men and women in our times, it is not even easy to get a new job, the older the applicant the greater being the difficulty. The man who has learned by years of practice one thing, often faces a tragedy when sets out on the hunt for a new job. It is why the phrase "out of a job" has such poignant connotations for the average man.

But did you ever stop to think of an ordinary actor or actress is out of a job probably on the average of two times a year? Here is a profession where a higher percentage of uncertainty of employment than almost any other work, and at the same time a profession which requires of its practitioners a degree of nervous sensitiveness, strict retention of youthful characteristics, good looks, a more exacting standard of personal appearance—good clothes, pretty gowns, and the like. The public, which sees only the glitter of the stage, does not often consider the other side, the economic problems the players face, the practical perils, and often the tragedies of the profession.

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"But, darling," I expostulated, "Jack has a tip straight from the inside. Twenty-five points means another twelve hundred and fifty dollars. This is no time to sell."

"But, Ned, something tells me—"

There was no answer to that, of course. I went down next morning and sold. That same day the stock rose three points and by the end of the week it was up ten. I was a little bit irritated at Elsie. Hunches were all right, I said, and all that, but there is such a thing as playing a hunch too far. She never yielded an inch. Something had told her, and that was all there was to it.

You can guess the rest. The stock started to sag. My friend held on; it sagged more. Still he was confident that it must come back. His tip was good—twenty-five points sure. Then the peace talk knocked the bottom out of things and the stock went down. And my friend's loss was more than double my profit.

All women aren't gifted as Elsie is. I know; or if they are their husbands aren't as well broken as I. And perhaps, as I said, the scientists can prove that the whole thing is entirely without solid foundation. But their proofs would have no influence with me. When my judgment and Elsie's intuition disagree I begin to analyze my judgment pretty carefully, and usually—not always, but usually—I wind up by deciding that what *something has told her* is worth following.

WE HAVE trained ourselves to be absolutely frank with each other. Occasionally—though I wouldn't have her suspect it for worlds—nevertheless occasionally her frankness hurts a bit. But I hold her to it.

"Down-town," I say to her, "I'm somewhat of a bluff. All men are. I don't think I'm as big a bluff as some of them; but I'm a bluff, nevertheless. Business is done partly in bluff. We have to pretend to be as big as we really are and just a little bit bigger, trusting to heaven that we'll grow before anyone finds us out. But here at home you can't afford to let me get away with any bluff even for a minute. You've got to be absolutely frank, mercilessly frank. You've got to hold me up to my very best. And whenever it comes to a question of sparing my feelings or giving me advice that I need, you mustn't think of my feelings, that's all. I've simply got to be sure that when you speak—you of all human beings in the world—I must know that absolutely nothing is held back."

That's the basis on which our partnership operates. And by grace of that arrangement she has bettered my health, increased my efficiency, added to my income, and lengthened my life.

More than all these, she has made me *really independent*. We talk of independence as though it were entirely a matter of money: nothing could be more absurd. Independence is the feeling that lives in a man's soul. I know a rich old bachelor who had worked hard for fifty years and suddenly made up his mind to take his seven millions and retire. He died six months later. He was absolutely dependent on that business. Once that interest was removed he collapsed like a punctured tire.

I loved books long before I loved Elsie.



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walking together. He took to carrying his stick again, and if, by chance, she put her hand on his arm to guide him, the color left his face. One night, when they had been sitting silently before the fire, she looked up suddenly to find him white and shaken, and the next night he did not come back.

Then it was that Martha resolved that since he would not, or could not, speak, she would, that this priceless thing should not slip beyond their reach because she was a woman and must keep silent.

How she told him, though, she never knew; but she did know that when he finally understood, his white face looked as though he had seen a miracle. For a long time he sat very still, then he reached out and touched her hand softly.

"Did you think I'd let you do that for me—a poor, blind wretch that could never be anything but a burden to you? Did you think that I would let you? It would be a fine way to repay your goodness to me!" His voice was breaking. "If—if I were just a man—I!"

Martha watched him yearningly—the poor sightless eyes, the sturdy pride in the young face.

"It would be a fine way to repay you," he repeated, "a fine way!" But his fingers were trembling around hers.

"But, Ben," she said bravely, "if—if I wanted you to repay me that way?"

"You couldn't really! You'd try to make me think you could, because you've—you've been bound to see that—that I've done what no man in my fix has a right to do, but you couldn't really! I'm not fool enough to believe that!"

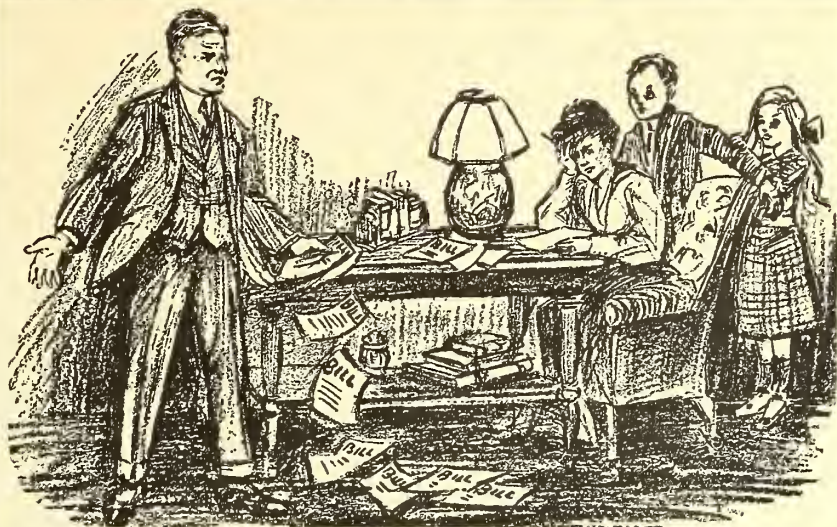
Martha got up suddenly and took his poor sightless head to her flat breast.

"Ben," she said, her shyness swept away by the flood of her feeling, "suppose I tell you I want it more than I ever wanted anything in my life?"

He sat up tensely and his hands went to her face. He was breathing in little pants and his lips were white. His fingers touched her mouth, her eyes, then slipped down until they could feel her heart beating, and a look of unbelieved joy poured over his face. "I'd never in the world have believed that this could happen to me," he said softly, "but it has—it has!"

LATER on, when they had come back to earth and were sitting before the fire, his sensitive fingers around hers, he protested again. "I can't do it, Martha, I can't. I'd be taking advantage of your goodness. You'd be sorry and I'd be sorry. If I could ever be anything but a burden to you—but I—I couldn't stand that!"

"You wouldn't be a burden, Ben," Martha said. "I wouldn't let you be, and I wouldn't have any respect for you if you'd let yourself be one, even if you are blind. I've got it all planned out. I'll go on with my teaching and you can go on with your papers, till you can learn something else. We can rent a little house out somewhere and have some chickens and a pig and a cow. Between whiles you could look after them, and I could come home after school and do what little housework there'd be to do. You'd have plenty around the yard to keep you busy while you had to be at home by yourself, then you could dry the dishes for me and bring in the wood and things."



"Well! Where has the Money Gone?"

Face to face with the New Month—and nothing but empty pockets and bills, Bills, BILLS

That's the dramatic, pitiful situation which confronts thousands of men and women the first of each month. And the irony of it is that the great majority of them are earning good salaries. But instead of forging ahead they are "going behind." Far more deadly than the spectre of Poverty is the skeleton-in-the-closet of Debt. Poverty is honorable. Debt is humiliating. Hunger and want can be helped by Charity, but Debt can be wiped clean only with Cash.

Are You Living Under False Pretenses?

There are thousands of men and women whose lives are a mockery of lies. They masquerade under the pretense of prosperous family life. Behind the scenes are their creditors waiting to collect for groceries, coal, clothing, rent, medicine and the other necessities of everyday life. You know this picture is true! You may not be one of the unfortunates in the clutches of Debt but there are many who are, and who cannot somehow free themselves.

Forging Ahead in Life and Saving Money

On the other hand you know men and women who are steadily forging ahead. They always seem to have "plenty to do with"—money, luxuries, vacations, automobiles and other material blessings which are denied you.

Don't blame your predicament to the "high cost of living." The fault is that you spend as you go without knowing what becomes of the money. You have no system of controlling your hard earned dollars. You let them slip through your fingers for this thing and that on impulse without time or reason.

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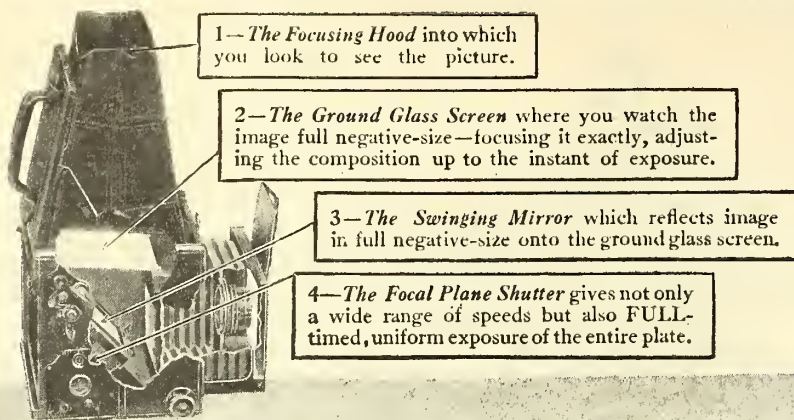
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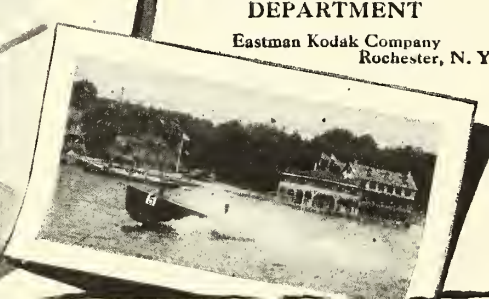
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His face lighted up as she talked. "Could I really help you, Martha?" he asked eagerly. "I know I could feed the chickens and the pig and the cow, and I can milk! Would that be helping you much?" he asked wistfully.

"Of course, it would," she said in a matter-of-fact voice; "I couldn't get along without somebody to do those things for me."

His face fairly shone at that. "And what I make with my papers would help some, too, wouldn't it?" he asked shyly.

"I should say it would!" Martha said. Martha's friends were horror-stricken, and she never knew how she found courage to go on in the face of their frantic opposition. But she did, and one night she and Ben went down to the minister's alone. As they came away, she had to turn her eyes away from the look on Ben's blind face.

They moved out to the suburbs at once, where the house had already been rented and the cow and chickens and pig were waiting for them. Martha kept on with her teaching as she had for nearly twenty years, and Ben kept on with his papers, proudly bringing home each night what he had earned during the day. He always insisted that she take what he brought, and she took it. It was she who did the managing and planning, and he who humbly acquiesced. He leaned on her as everybody had always leaned, and she was content to have it so. That he was happy she could not doubt as she watched him going about the yard singing softly, his blind face turned upward.

AND she was so happy at first that she did not think or care about the years between them. But after a time she noticed that people looked after them curiously, pityingly, and spoke about them as soon as they were out of hearing. She thought at first that it was because Ben was blind, that the pitying looks were for his blindness. But one day a woman, who should have been her friend, disillusioned her.

"So people think I'm his mother!" she told herself quiveringly, as she looked at her plain middle-aged face in the mirror. "And they are sorry for him when they find out I'm his wife. I know what they think! They think I took advantage of him; but I didn't! He never asked how old I was. And I've made him happy! They can't say I haven't done that, and as long as he's happy nothing else matters. He'll never know about my age," she said pitifully; "and what he don't know won't hurt him!"

Thus she reasoned; but she was not comforted, for if withholding the truth did not hurt him it hurt her. And as the tie of confidence grew closer and closer between them, this one thing she kept from him assumed gigantic proportions. But overshadowing the longing to tell him the truth loomed the fear that he would find it out. This fear grew upon her so that she kept him more and more away from other people, jealously guarding him at all times against learning the truth. In spite of the fact that this fear soon grew all-consuming, her conscience did not let her rest, and one day it goaded her into being half honest with him, and he laughed at her.

"I never count the years or think of birthdays," he said.

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"But, Ben, I am older than you are," she told him fearfully.

"Well, is that any crime?"

"No; but you ought to be the older."

"We are as old as we feel, Martha," he said gravely, "and it doesn't matter which is the older in years, the man or the woman."

"Yes; it does!" she said passionately. "Yes; it does!" Nevertheless, she felt comforted for a time. But her fears came back and were with her always, and her deception, growing bigger and bigger, hung between them, marring for her the otherwise perfect years.

Then came the hope that Ben might see. A surgeon had come among them, working miracles, and they went to him. Martha sat tensely as the great man examined and reexamined Ben's eyes. He was smiling as he finished.

"Is there any hope?" he asked in answer to their eager questions. "There is—an operation, a complicated one, but one I have every reason to hope will be successful. The price?" He named one far lower than they had dared to hope and yet, at that, high enough.

"We can never do it, Martha," Ben said wistfully as they went back home.

"We will do it!" she said firmly.

"But, how, Martha? I don't see how?"

"There's just one thing to do, Ben. We've paid for the house and we can raise enough money on that."

He protested against that with a little cry. "No, Martha, not that! Not your home for me!"

"It's the only way, Ben," she said, "and it may mean your sight. That, or the hope of it, is worth any sacrifice. We'd be foolish to let this chance slip for the want of a few hundred dollars that we can raise."

As Martha said, there was but one thing to do, and she set about doing it. She mortgaged their home over Ben's protest and put the money in the bank where it could be drawn out as needed.

SHE did not let herself think what Ben's regaining his sight might mean to her, until he had gone to the hospital for the three weeks' treatment necessary before the operation and she was alone for the first time since they were married. Then she sat down and faced it, and the fears she had crowded behind her, and the years of failure to tell the truth, had grown into a monster so hideous she shuddered away from it.

"He'll never forgive me," she said pitifully, looking in the mirror and seeing herself as he would see her, then at his bright, boyish photograph on the dresser. "He'll never forgive me! He'll say I took advantage of his blindness; but I didn't! I didn't mean to! He never asked my age or how I looked! He never seemed to care! But I ought to have told him! I've known all along that I ought! I did try to tell him once, and he wouldn't let me." Then she winced as she remembered that it was after they were married that she had tried to tell him, and then only part of the truth. "But I have made him happy," she defended, "and that ought to count for something; but it won't! I've tied him to a woman old enough to be his mother and made a laughing stock of him, and he'll never forgive that! He'll despise and leave me, and I can't blame him! Well,

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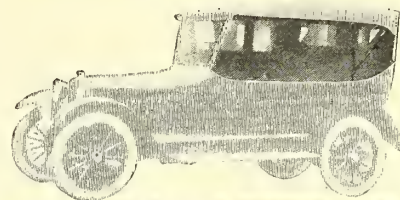
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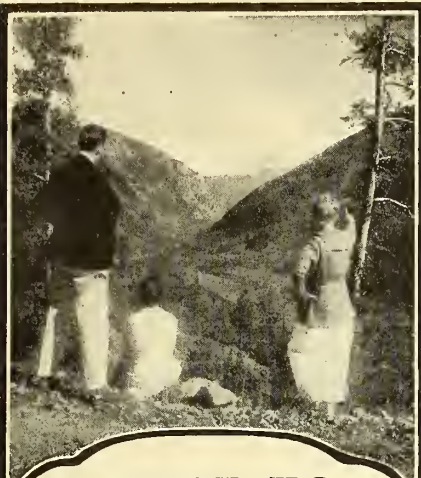


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She went to the hospital every day, pitifully eager to make the most of every precious minute left her. He was so happy over the hope of being able to see that he talked all the time she was with him of his plans, of what he would do for her, and he did not notice that for the first time she did not enter into them. She agreed when she had to, but at other times she listened silently, clinging pathetically to his hand as he talked.

Then came the operation, and Martha thought she would never live through it. When it was over, they let her see him for a moment. He was weak and white and shaken, but his lips were smiling the old brave smile from beneath the bandages, and she went away quivering.

It took a long time for his eyes to heal, but long before they were healed Martha knew that he would see, and he knew it, and his young face was full of awe and gratitude at the miracle.

The evening before they were to remove the bandages Martha stayed with him as long as they would let her, holding his fingers silently. When they told her it was time to go, she kissed him quietly, then went home.

SHE spent that night sitting in the dark by the window, her hands lying in her lap. She did not have to fight. She had done that, and won. She knew just what she would tell him, and that she would not let anything he might in his pity say move her. It was ended, so far as she was concerned, and the last page, but one, was turned. She shrank a little, though, at the thought of the turning of that last page.

The next morning she got ready to go to the hospital. She had already packed his things, and his trunk stood strapped and locked in the bedroom.

At the hospital she listened as the doctor talked to her, and quietly took the list of written directions he gave her. Then she went to Ben. She had asked just one thing—that she be alone with him when the bandages were removed.

She found him waiting quietly, his face looking as though he was about to enter the holy of holies. The light in the room had already been adjusted, so there was nothing for her to do but remove the bandages. She did not kiss him. She felt that she could not; but when he felt her fingers at the bandages ready to untie them, he stopped her and drew her around in front of him.

"Martha, aren't you going to kiss me first? You haven't ever forgotten it before," he said reproachfully.

Martha caught her breath, then kissed him, her poor lips quivering against his; then, eager to have it over, her hands went to the bandages over his eyes again. But he stopped her the second time and pulled her back in front of him.

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"Why in such a hurry?" he asked, laughing softly. "I want to see you once more before they come off."

His hands went to her face, moving tenderly over every line; then they moved down to her throat, that was swelling until it felt as though it would burst. They lingered there a moment caressingly, then moved on down to where her heart was straining almost beyond endurance.

"Don't!"—her voice was breaking. "Please—let me go! I—I want to get it over with!"

His hands went to her shoulders then and held her firmly. "Martha,"—there was something in his voice she had never heard before, something tender and protecting beyond words—"before they come off I want to tell you I've known all the time what you think I'm going to find out now. I don't know how it is, but the blind always know. I didn't know, though, until recently, that you cared like this"—he put a tender hand over her laboring heart.

"I know, too, the foolish things you were going to say, and, wife, that hurts a little after all these years—that you could think that a few years one way or the other could make any difference between us. Come here!" he said suddenly, and Martha obeyed, for again there was that in his voice she had never heard there—the man tone—the voice of the male of the species. Heretofore he had asked her and waited for her, now he commanded and she went.

He held her against him with one arm, her face hidden.

"Now look at me!"

And she looked. His bandages were off and he was looking down at her with seeing eyes. And suddenly she began to tremble, for in them she saw no disappointment, but everything she had ever hoped for, every dream she had ever had—the look of the man for his woman.

"TWO-BIT SEATS" is a love story which will appear in the July number, by Gladys E. Johnson, a new writer, as was the story you have just finished reading. "The American Magazine" welcomes new writers.

Wanted—Another Ostermoor

"Somewhere in this happy land," as De Wolf Hopper used to say in his immortal "Casey," there is another Ostermoor.

Not necessarily another mattress. In this case "Ostermoor" stands for a lot of other things, at present unknown, which might be made equally famous by Magazine Advertising.

Once there was no nationally known soap. Now, probably folks buy by brand name more soap than any other household article.

Not so long ago very few housewives thought of using canned soups. Soup could be made so easily at home. Yet the sale of canned soups, advertised extensively in magazines, increased 204% from 1909 to 1914.

There's nothing so constantly worn and so frequently worn out as shoes, and yet for this country of something like 25,000,000 families there are mighty few shoes advertised.

True of canned vegetables and fruits, too, and yet the tendency in housekeeping is surely toward ready-prepared dishes. Can you think of a brand name for tomatoes?

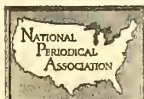
You can't name, right off hand, a brand of canned salmon, can you? Chances are you just ask for a "can of salmon."

Also you might eat more salmon if you were sufficiently urged.

One would think that the Life Insurance companies, since their market is so universal, would constantly drive home in Magazine Advertising the protective value of life insurance, and pave the way for their agents. It would speed up the writing of life insurance, make life insurance really popular, and increase the incomes of thousands of agents.

A former big — concern would give a lot of money if it could find a way out of its failing business. It has had all kinds of insurance, except Magazine Advertising.

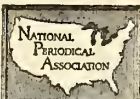
Mr. Manufacturer, think, think over your line. Is there not something in it which could be made a specialty—the leader? Do enough people use it to make it a safe bet that a million might? Offer it to them through Magazine Advertising. Will you talk it over with us?



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"Middle Western Apathy"

(Continued from page 32)

neutrality, in case Germany violated that neutrality, as Germany did violate it. (Some of the midland papers assisted in the muddling of our slightly-less-than-average mind on this point. These papers, being "neutral," agreed that Belgium had "violated her own neutrality by extensive secret agreements with England," but they carefully refrained from giving a detailed account of the "extensive secret agreements." Papers of this sort were "conservative;" they didn't want to get the people "inflamed.")

Germany's two explanations of submarine warfare were these: (1) "We shall soon decide to starve England by a submarine campaign. We shall surround the

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